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THE NUMERAL "TWO" IN THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES.

THE numeral "Two" is, in the Phoenico-Hebrew dialect—i. e. North-Semitic—denoted by שנים, אשנן, שנה; but in the Aramaeo-Syriac—also a branch of the North-Semitic, and, considered geographically, nearest to the former—it is ܬܪܝܢ, ܬܪܝܢ. In Arabic and Sabaeic—South-Semitic—it corresponds to Phoenico-Hebrew اثنان, ʾṯnān [תְּנִי]; on the other hand, in Ethiopic, which is most closely connected with the former dialects, it is ከለኤ (kēlē'ē). In Assyrian it is šinā. It might be inferred from a comparison of these forms, that both the North [and East] and the South used the expression שנה, תְּנִי to denote the numeral "Two," with the exception of the Northern Aramaic and the Southern Ethiopic, which languages had other forms to express this numeral. But it must be observed that this only holds good for the Cardinal. The Ordinal—like so many other notations of the numeral "Two"—proves that in the Aramaic-Syriac the stem תְּנִי in תְּנִינִי (ה), ܬܢܝܢܐ, and Ethiopian—although rarely—ሰረዓ: was used, by the side of ከለኤ: ፳፻፲. In the same way the forms כּלָּאִים in Hebrew (probably also in the Meša inscription, line 23, כּלָּא, כּלָּא), ܟܠܐ or ܟܠܐ in Arabic, and *kilallān*, *kilattān* in Assyrian, also occur to denote "both," "of two kinds"¹. Consequently תְּנִי-שנה and ܟܠܐ is common to all Semitic dialects, but ܬܪܝܢ is specially Aramaic.

Which notions did the Semites attach to the numeral "Two"?

¹ *Zeitschrift für Keilschriftforschung*, II, 307-8; *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, V, 104-5.

The numeral שנים helps us to trace the original meaning of the stem שנה. שנים has nothing to do with שנה "to alter," and שנה "year" ¹. The law about Semitic sibilants shows this already. For the ש in שנה, שנה; חל, שנה; سنة, שנה is based upon a ש sound; whereas the ש in שנים, שנים is based upon a ש. In accordance with this, this form has in Aramaeo-Syriac a ש, in the Ordinal (תנינה) תנינה formed from the same stem. It is known that the Hebrew ש is a compound of two sibilants, and its original Hebrew sound can only be traced through the Arabic and Syriac. Whenever the Hebrew ש corresponds with an Aramaic ש and an Arabic ث, the original contained a ث sound; but if the Hebrew ש corresponds with an Aramaic ש and an Arabic س, in that case the ש was originally a س sound. ש, ש, ث on the one hand, and ש, ש, س on the other, always correspond ².

The stem of the Semitic word for "two" is therefore ثنى. The Arabic grammarians already derived اثنان from a form ثنى or ثنى. Philippi also considers اثنان to be *tin*, abbreviated from *ting*, from the root (we should prefer to call it "stem") ثنى ultimae ³. Dietrich already fixed the meaning of this stem ثنى ⁴. He says: "From the preceding remarks (about the numeral 'one'), the relation between שנים, اثنان and שנה, ثنى is no longer doubtful to me. The verb is not necessarily the derived form. It is true, *duplicare* could have been derived from *duplum*, but the notion 'to fold' (a sensual perception) presupposes as little the notion 'double' or 'twofold,' as *plicare* the notion *duo*. But the meaning 'to bend,' 'to fold' stands foremost among the Arabic meanings (e.g. of the hair مَتْنَى 'the braid,' *Amralk*. v. 34). The notion is obviously that of 'to lay together.' In complete accord with this is the kindred stem ثِن 'gathered hay,' ثِنان 'tangled, parasitical plants,' which is then in ثَن applied to the hair, ثَن 'the hair on the feet of the animal,' *Pr*.

¹ *Zeitschrift d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Ges.*, XLI, 621.

² *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, I, 270.

³ *Zeitschrift d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Ges.*, XXXII, 77.

⁴ *Abhandlungen für semit. Wortforsch.*, 239.

I, 155. The same connexion exists between כפל 'the double,' and כף 'to bend' (whence כף 'the bent hand') . . . Thus שנים, obviously, meant originally 'the double,' and had the dual form only because it consisted of two parts, like 'the hurdle' משפחים; its singular may already have meant 'the double,' as indicated by the feminine form (א)שתי (שת), the *n* of which was subsequently lost, as in בת from בן." Philippi agrees with this derivation¹. "שנים may mean, either, from the original meaning of the root *tanaj* 'fold, folding, bending, folded, doubled,' or, from its secondary meaning, 'repetition, repeated'; and may, from either meaning, have obtained the meaning 'Two.' I am, however, obliged to adopt the former assumption, because the second would not properly account for the dual. The word must, according to its meaning, be compared with the Arabic ثُنَى, or the Hebrew מִשְׁנֶה. But whether the singular *tin* had already the meaning of the numeral—in which case the meaning 'Two' would have arisen from the notion 'the folded, double'—or the dual first acquired that meaning, must remain doubtful. The former assumption may perhaps be strengthened by the certainly extremely ancient Semitic feminine forms of the dual, which seem to point to a singular ثِنَّة as feminine to ثِن, in the meaning of 'Two.' On the other hand, nothing can be said against the assumption, that the dual form of our word first obtained the meaning of 'Two'; but when, certainly already in ancient Semitic, the want of a feminine form of this numeral was felt, the feminine form *tinainā*, respectively *tinaimā*, arose, analogous to other dual forms. But even in the former case, the dual could not very well have acquired the meaning 'Two' after the word had already had that meaning, otherwise *tin* and *tinainā*, respectively *tinaimā*, must have obtained that meaning simultaneously, cf. כפלים and כפל. For, if not, the dual would be used here in the sense of a mere duality. But if, as we have seen

¹ L. c., 80 sqq. I am obliged to quote the whole passage, because my conception can only thus be understood.

before, a dual of the word had already obtained in the ancient Semitic, and the ancient Semitic meaning of the dual was that of a combination by pairs, an original Semitic dual in that sense cannot be assumed. Our dual cannot, therefore, have originally meant 'two folds,' or 'two foldings,' 'two folded or doubled things,' so that the notion developed therefrom would most appropriately have to be compared with the German *zweifältig*, or the English 'twofold' (Gesenius, Sayce). Rather was the dual put to denote the two folded or bent parts, necessarily belonging to a fold or a bend, and hence, to a folded or bent thing. Thus the dual is used, in accordance with the principle of its application in the Hebrew רחיים, מלקחים, משפחים, or the word כפלים, which has a similar meaning, and, from this meaning, it derived, either by itself, or together with the singular *tin*, the meaning of the number 'Two,' in the sense of 'the folded, or the double thing.'"

We see from this that neither Dietrich nor Philippi finally decide whether our numeral—the etymology of which is certain—received its meaning of "Two" already in the singular or only in the dual. The former scholar inclines to the assumption that the singular already meant "Two," whilst the other sees no objection to the dual only having obtained that meaning. But since ثنى or ثنا occurs already in an old Arabic poet in the sense of "Two"¹, that meaning of the singular would appear certain. However, ثنى or ثنا may—and this is the most probable alternative—have been reversely formed from the dual, just as כפל from כפלים. For it is very difficult to assume that the singular and the dual obtained their meaning simultaneously, or that the singular had already the meaning "Two." What need was there to create a dual, denoting nothing more than the singular did already²? All other duals also are

¹ *Zeitschrift d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Ges.*, XLI, 603.

² On the other hand it is easier to assume, that on the gradual extinction of the dual, as in Hebrew and Syriac, a singular, equivalent to the dual, was formed.

opposed to such an assumption. For with all other duals, the singular—if occurring at all—never means the same as the dual, i.e. a pair, or something double; but it is always a genuine singular, with a singular meaning like all other words, e.g. ידים—ידי (ערכים—ערב), &c. It is certain that in Semitic every dual, as indeed every plural, must be preceded by a singular (logically, it cannot be thought otherwise, but that a unit must precede a duality). We must therefore assume *a priori*, that a form כפל and ثن—not of course the still occurring ثن (ثنی) and כפל, for these two words are, as shown already, reversely formed from the dual—existed originally, i.e. before the dual was formed therefrom. The next question is therefore to trace the meaning of the not yet dualized forms כפל and ثن.

An analogous form may be of service here. I allude to the Aramaeo-Syriac numeral ܬܪܝܢ, תרין “Two.” It is usually assumed that תרין and שנים are formed from the same stem, and the Arabic اثنان seems to confirm this view. For, as we saw before, the sibilant ש in שנים—corresponding with اثنان—must show an Aramaic ܬ. But in spite of the consistently applied law about sibilants, and notwithstanding the similar dual ending and meaning of תרין—שנים, the sounds *n* and *r* point to different stems underlying both words for “Two.” The example בר—בן proves little, for not only do several scholars declare these two words to be etymologically distinct, but besides Dietrich’s ingenious explanation¹, that בר is a return formation of the frequently used בנש (written even ברנש) through dissimilation for *bannaš*, and in the same way תרין for *tnein* is erroneous; for תרין must rather be compared with ܬܢܝܢ, where there is, however, no dissimilation. Moreover, its feminine should not be ܬܢܝܢ, but *tantein*. The same is the case with the compounds of the Tens ܬܢܝܢܝܬ (instead of *tneiesar*), &c. We find everywhere the *r* to be original. Even according to Barth², who assumes בר=בן, it occurs only, as he says

¹ *Zeitschrift d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Ges.*, XXXII, 38.

² *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, III, 58₃.

himself, through the influence of the labial; for which there is no occasion in our numeral. There is therefore no connexion whatever between *תרין* and *שנים*.

What then is the meaning of *תרין*?

Fleischer¹ wants to derive *תרין* from a secondary stem *תר*, which itself was taken from the viii form of *وتر*, respectively the Etpeel of *مَدَّ*, so that *תרין* would be as much as *وتران* = "two individuals." Wright² hesitates whether to accept this explanation or the usual one. But Philippi's objections are well founded, particularly in as far as it is the question of the secondary form *תר*. Yet Fleischer's assumption can be upheld, although he rejected it afterwards himself³, only another method must be applied.

The word *תרין* must not be derived from *תר*, formed by the Arabic viii (secondary) form, but from the root *وتر*, pure and simple, from which the Arabic has made a form *وتر* *solus, unicus*. If we put to this *وتر* the Syriac termination of the dual *مَ*, then we get a form *وترين*, *سلاف*, and by the omission of the *ו* form *לופ* — *תרין* = "double, two." Although the primae *v, y* are usually retained in the formation of Syriac nouns, it is by no means always the case. Besides the group of feminine infinitives of these verbs, like *לחבל* (= *שָׁבַח* = *נָבַח*) from *לחב*; *לחל* (= *שָׁנַח* = *שָׁנַח*) from *לחל*, &c., we find also *לחל* "sleep," with omission of the first root-letter, from the same stem *לחל*. Also *לחל* (= *לחל* = *לחל*) must, according to König⁴, be traced from a Semitic stem *لوسم*. The same is, according to Lagarde⁵, the case with the word *לחל*; *לחל* = *saj* = *wisaj*, from a stem *לחי*. If, therefore, *תרין* stands for the original *ותרין*—like *לחל* for *לחל*—then we have here again, I think, the etymology of the notions of a number in the same way as it is found in *שנים*. I have already observed, that *לחל* (from which *لحان* is derived) means "to bend, to fold." This meaning is particularly

¹ *Verhandl. d. Königl. Sächs. Gesell. d. Wiss.*, 1863, S. 146.

² *Arab. Grammar*.² I, 288, rem. b.

³ *Kleinere Schriften*, I, 56 Anm.

⁴ *Lehrgebäude*, II, 1, 104.

⁵ *Uebersicht*, &c., 81. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebr. Gr.*²⁶, 278.

confirmed by the noun תְּנַיָּה "rope, cord." But the meaning "to bend, fold" of our word וָתֵר can be traced with the same amount of certainty. Although the verb formations of the stem וָתֵר show no longer the meaning of "to bend, fold"; yet a whole series of noun formations of the same stem testify to that meaning. Like תְּנַיָּה, so also וָתֵר, מִיתָר, יָתֵר, mean "rope," and, connected with this meaning, also וָתֵר, שֵׁט, נֶרְוִס, *nervus, funiculus*. The expression יִתְרָה הַכֹּבֶד (עַל, מִן) (only in the Pentateuch) means probably "fold of the liver," i.e. the band from which the liver is suspended, and by which it is fastened to the diaphragm.

All that has been said here makes it more than probable that the singular תֵּן was originally equal to וָתֵר—in fact the transitions of the meaning of these two words run parallel—and only its dual obtained the meaning of the numeral "Two" ¹. Whether אֲנָן—אֲנָן (א) is like *Doppelung*—two-fold—"Two," or whether it denotes "the two folded or bent parts, necessarily belonging to a fold or a bend, respectively of a folded or bent thing," I will not decide. The Syriac חֲרִין is, consequently, according to the development of the sense, a kindred formation of אֲנָן—אֲנָן. The stems, however, from which these notions were developed are different. Of course, besides the specially Syriac (Arabic) form אֲנָן, there existed also תִּנִּין, a form corresponding with אֲנָן—אֲנָן, which is preserved in the Ordinal תִּנִּינָה.

That the dual of the theme תֵּן is the oldest numerical notation for "Two," is proved not only by the circumstance that it occurs in all Semitic languages (partly as Cardinals, and partly as Ordinals), but also—and this should be specially noticed—that it occurs in the Chamitic languages of North-Africa; Old-Egyptian *śn*, Coptic ⲥⲏⲁⲩ, feminine ⲥⲏⲩⲧⲉ (which is a dual form)², Barbaric *sen, sin*, feminine *senet, senot*, "Two." Professor Nöldeke writes to me: "This cannot possibly be a case of borrowing, because, on the one

¹ Cf. מִתְנָן—מִתְנָן; מִתְנָן—מִתְנָן.

² *Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Ges.*, XLVI, 98 and 118.

hand, all Semites except the Ethiopians (who have lost them), and on the other all those of Barbary (including Tuareg), have these forms." But I cannot infer from this phenomenon that اثنان is in no way related to ثنى, as Prof. Nöldeke tells me that he expressed in a letter his strong doubts about it, as against Philippi. It is not at all impossible that *sn* = ثنى may have meant in that common (Chamito-Semitic) primitive language also "to bend, to fold," or something similar. Cf. also Professor Reinisch's essay: *Das Zahlwort vier und neun in den chamitisch-semitischen Sprachen*¹. The Ethiopic *kələ'ē* "Two," כלאם, כלאן (abbreviated כלא), Assyrian *kilallān*, "of two kinds, both," cannot be etymologically explained—it must be observed that the dual form is used here all along.

The results of my inquiry are: (1) The root ثنى means "to fold, bend" (the stem ثنى "fold, bend," *solus, unicus*), thence the dual "Two." This root is common to the Chamites and the Semites, thence اثنان is probably the oldest Semitic notation of the number "Two." (2) The stem وتر (Semitic) means "to fold, bend"; the stem وَثَرَ, ... *solus, unicus*, thence the Syriac dual "Two." The form ٢٢٢ arose, therefore, not only after the separation of the Semites from the Chamites, but within Semitism, and after the division into separate dialects of Syriac (Arabic).

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¹ *Sitzungsberichte d. Kais. Acad. d. Wiss. zu Wien* (phil.-histor. Klasse), CXXI.